177 substratum on which each tribe has grafted its original system. The
121 study of this substratum would help define the problem of origins and influences.

After this, we have at our disposal the support of philology and above all the advantage of seeing the Bambara live their beliefs and of discovering their myths in a crude but expressive material as well as in numerous rites. The observations made over a wide field of inquiry serve as the basis for the presentation of this religious system.

114 The Bambara have been for a long time the subject of articles and
121 works, of which we will give below a concise bibliography. The only author who, until now, has attempted to describe their beliefs as a system is L. Tauxier whose study of La Religion Bambara /Bambara religion/ takes into account to a large extent the works of the Abbé Henry and Ch. Monteil. However, through the descriptions of these different observers which are certainly conscientious, this religion appears as a composite of diverse and even inconsistent elements with no apparent link between them. Despite a uniform plan and a laudable absence of preconceived ideas, L. Tauxier has been unable to bring out the fundamental concepts of the people he observed.

In fact, the study of a present-day Negro religion runs into difficulties of various kinds stemming on the one hand from the necessity of going into the field and on the other hand from the largely esoteric character of the doctrine. These circumstances make this study essentially a work of discovery.

Indeed, Bambara religion, like all Sudanese religions, has an exoteric part, quite easily accessible, which observation conducted along scientific lines may reveal in detail. Rules of life admitted by all, beliefs openly professed, and public or private practices may be the object of detailed work. But this religion, like that of the neighboring peoples, rests upon a doctrine whose fundamental principles
[609] are known to elders and initiates who show considerable aversion to confiding in strangers, particularly whites. Such a situation explains the ignorance in which scholarship has remained for so long concerning the religious way of thinking of this people (1).

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1. The Bambara themselves distinguish between two kinds of knowledge. The first, called doni fyẽma "knowledge (which has) wind" /xviii/ is superficial

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and considered to be "the introduction to beliefs and customs." It belongs to adults who know little of cosmology. On the contrary, the second, called "deep knowledge" (doniya duna or kuru doniya), is restricted to priests, heads of families, elders of both sexes who are versed in "the science of the things of creation." It can only be acquired slowly in the course of successive initiations and through actual instruction which is sometimes diffused during the rites.

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/xviii/ A rigorous method of observation which neglects no detail and which involves the use of close collaboration from the natives has brought forth a system coherent in all its parts and, it may be said, based on a metaphysics hitherto unknown. Taking the Bambara postulates as a point of departure, the sequence of events through the myths, the development of institutions and technology, their operation and the actual destiny of man in the cosmos all unfold in a logical framework.

On the other hand, this system is projected into the concrete in the form of symbols which borrow the most diversified aspects and which play an active role. The symbolism not only penetrates religious life proper by appearing in the sanctuaries, in the cult materials (shapes and sign writing), or during religious ceremonies (times and places, rituals, etc.), but is present in every aspect of secular life and daily behavior.

The metaphysics and the religion of this people offer a structural entity which includes all social, technological, and economic activities. In the following chapters, we shall attempt to clarify these principles and this system. We believe we may safely state that certain inconsistencies or contradictions presented by the religious system as it is described here are not due to Bambara thought--even though it is subtle and based on a dialectic--but to lacunae in the investigation.

1: Dieterlen--85 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Chapter 3

THE PERSON

812 The Bambara conceive of man (homo) as the principle of nature. He is "the seed of the world" and as such reflects the totality of beings and things in their essence and in their situation. Like the universe, man is life, and like life, "he is maintained by the attraction of the cardinal angels." Universe and man are each the condition of the other: the totality of things upholds the human being in his place and situation and makes him persevere within himself. Man, on the other hand, is the basis, the "raison d'être," and the cause of the universe by virtue of his consciousness and the knowledge he has of himself.

In this way the principle of duality, contained in the original creative thought and realized in the universe by the sky and the earth, is reflected in the person. The human being shows in his body the separation of the sexes necessary to the multiplication of the species —a separation, expressed in the myth of Pemba and Mousso Koroni, that shows the disorders, the difficulties, and the conflicts implicit in such a situation. But through his twin souls, the human being brings about the ideal union of the sexes as expressed in the myth of Faro's androgyny.

812 928 Moreover, these mythical personalities are present in man: Faro through the ni and the dya, Pemba through the tere and the nyama, Mousso Koroni through the wanzo. It can also be said that the peregrinations of these beings and their pursuits in time and in the mythical regions are the expression of man's psychological states such as the inner explorations and conflicts necessary to man's defining himself within himself and with respect to the rest of the creation. In other words, they are the expression of the growing consciousness of self. The whole religious and social attitude of the individual testifies to the interplay of these various forces, between which he must maintain balance and harmony.

000 /57/ In this chapter we shall examine in succession the following elements that make up or determine the person: the spiritual principles (ni, dya, tere, nyama, wanzo), the parts of the human body related to them, and certain social attributes of the individual (given name, family name, device, taboo). Finally we shall consider the cathartic role of the institution of joking relationship founded on the notion of duality.

831 lines or dots depending upon the sex of those who used them. Thus,
801 women marked their spindles with four lines whereas men twisted three threads on their shuttles.

826 On the metaphysical level, man's body, "the seed of the world," is identified with the cereal grain. The Bambara separate cereal
824 grains into seven parts, corresponding to a division of the human
812 organs into seven groups (1). Man and grain are one and identical in

1. The divisions of the grain are as follows: kungu, "little beard of millet," involucre; fara dye, "white bark," glume and glumales; fara fi, "black bark," bran and proteinaceous bark; fara mugu, "farinaceous bark" (which corresponds to a milky diastatic zone); mugu dunta, "flour for eating," starch; kolo dye, "white bone," embryo; kise de, "son of grain," the micropyle from which the rootlet issues at the time of germination. The classification of organs in relation to these divisions is under study. We thank M. Pitot of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire for the identification of the parts of the grain corresponding to the native divisions. In certain villages, grains [782] undergo a process of hulling and the determined elements only are used in the making up of the ritually offered millet mash.

their substance. On the other hand, the basic foods, that is, the eight principal cereals, are symbolically present in the collarbones (kolo kalanjiri, or ka kolo). Man carries within him his subsistance, and its location reflects the person's general condition (2). As proof [783]

2. See p. 53, n. 2.

of /72/ man's spiritual integrity, these grains leave him when he is in a state of impurity. He is then drained of his substance and subsistence. Thepurpose of purification is to reestablish this wholeness.

812 Moreover, the bonds which unite the whole person, body and
561 spiritual principles, to the cosmos, are made clear by the fact that

812 561 man's life passes through seven successive ages corresponding to the seven skies, the seven earths, the seven waters, and the seven stages of millet growth. The seven ages are: bilakoro, "an uncircumcised person"; kemɛkoro "a circumcised person of the last age grade"; tyebaɲɛ, literally, a big man; maseɲɛ, literally, a successful person; makoroba, literally, an elderly person; madeseɲɛ, literally, a person who cannot succeed, an old man; mabaɲɛ, an impotent old man.

812 561 796 These bonds are also confirmed annually for everybody in the course of the ritual called "the renewal of the year." By renewing the cardinal points, the Bambara add to the strength of these poles of attraction which are responsible for maintaining things within themselves and with respect to each other. At the same time they proceed to a "revival of the body and soul," including all from the youngest to the oldest. For the year to come, they take a fresh breath, a new life, and submit the body to internal and external purifications, making it adequate to fulfill its role.

Effects of Death on the Person

761 The first effect of death is to dissociate the elements that make up the person. The religious practices, imbued with respect for these elements, aim at organizing their preservation in order that they may not be lost to the deceased, to society, and finally, to Faro who controls life and assures the survival of souls.

The dya remains in the water where it will be kept until the birth of a child. But the ni, which escapes from the body with the last breath, is watched for by the head of the family who catches it and carries it to an altar. As we have seen above, it will return to animate the dya of the child who will inherit the deceased's spiritual principles, leaving behind it on the altar, a kind of exuvia, mana or folo, as a sign of the deceased's sojourn on earth.

The tere becomes transformed at death; liberated from the body, it becomes nyama which escapes and which may sometimes attack the living. Proof of this is the fear aroused by the sight of a corpse. /73/ It would seem that the tere's combination of strength and character is expressed by the activity of the nyama; but it is really dangerous only in the case of violent death (the murder of a man or an animal). In this case the nyama attacks the responsible party. If death is natural, the nyama, like the ni, is directed by the relatives and placed on the family altar (pembele) in the course of the

776 drink, dress themselves, wear adornments, etc. -- in short, behave exactly like living men.

[125] All peoples use or have used such language in trying to express a concept which is by its nature impossible to make concrete. It is, therefore, perhaps premature to conclude that a Bambara cannot conceive of a strictly immaterial world for his manes. He is merely at present incapable of giving a description unencumbered with concrete terms in habitual use. However, it may be stated in general that the Bambara does not trouble himself about the why or how of things outside of what he sees or knows. Reality surrounds him and limits him. He makes decisions on the spur of the moment and also under the influence of time-honored empiricism which is the basis of custom.

776 We have pointed out that among the incorporeal souls are some who, through the right efforts, rise to such heights that they can enter the world of spirits. There are spirits, indeed, who have nothing of the human about them. What are their origin and nature? The Bambara say of them: ma si fa do, meaning "It is a kind of person." Here, too, the expression betrays the thought. Aside from the fact that the native vocabulary does not provide for expressions strictly immaterial, the Bambara has an inevitable tendency to use himself as an object of comparison. For him, the world of the spirits like that of the manes, is analogous to our own. But the manner in which he speaks of the spirits contradicts his words. A spirit is invisible, without a material body; if it appears, it does so under the most diverse forms, borrowed for a brief time. A spirit is often called "a wind," meaning "a fluid." It is also a weightless substance, so rarefied that it can go anywhere -- even to entering a living man's body, where it can perform all sorts of fantastic things (1).

1. See Chapter 7.

For the Bambara, most spirits remain in this vague and inconsistent state. Only events, circumstances or the native's will occasionally tear some of them away from this chaos and transports them to the worldly scene (2). We shall speak of them

2. Assuming for these and other similar

571 with individuals in the same way as individuals deal with each other. They are not only moral persons, as we put it, 182 but they are truly persons, [156] as evidenced by the Blacks' impulsive need for anthropomorphism.

812 Let us note, finally, that a Black does not abstract himself from surrounding nature; nor has he reached the stage of development at which man regards himself as a kind of intermediary between the natural and the supernatural. The Black is an integral part of nature and that is why he treats it like himself. Therefore, natural phenomena are subjected on his behalf to the same kind of ritual sequences as those followed in his own behavior.

Chapter 3

Communities

1. General Considerations

114 Native society is not simple, and Europeans studying 631 these countries have used terminology which, not being defined, has obscured reality.

In particular, they have used the terms "kingdom" and "empire" to describe Sudanese states, and both authors and readers have taken these expressions to imply a social organization more or less analogous to those meant by these words in our country.

631 These empires or kingdoms, however, are simply clans, i.e., political groups that have imposed their authority on other groups whose members then become their tributaries, members of a caste, or slaves. Such an empire, if one wishes to use this term, has no exact geographical boundaries or, if one prefers, its boundaries are constantly changing. Furthermore, the country embraced by this term has two parts: territories which may be said to be under direct administration, in which the authority of the clan is directly imposed; and those territories whose position with respect to the ruling clan

212 801 by numbers, and notably by ten, which may be obtained, among other ways and if it's a question of representing the Creator, by adding the first four numbers, or by adding the number five to [776] itself." Ten is the numerical symbol of Faro (god of water); it symbolizes what is just, true, perfect, and complete.

The symbolism of numbers is used in divination: a first [787] group of eight signs, called the secret count, reproduces the seven first numbers which, according to a Bambara myth, were engraved in space at the instant that the Creator by his word formed the universe. They contain the whole universe.

These numerical signs were ritually traced on the most varied occasions.

[802] Finally, we must note the existence of the sign for "nothing," fu gundo, zero, which stands at the beginning of a series of 196 numerical signs used by those who practice arithomancy.

The word Mandé, of central significance for 44 peoples, may be interpreted, according to some, as manin (the secret name for ten), number of unity and of the cultural community.

F. Writing

212 For everyday use, the Bambara have adopted arabic characters, called by them "writing of the Blacks." In fact, only those who have studied in the Marabouts' schools know how to read or write them. No written literature, properly speaking, exists. A 538 large store of traditions, epics, tales, legends, songs, and proverbs is transmitted orally from generation to [17] generation by professional storytellers, the griot. Moreover, the whole sum of sci- 867 entific, juridical, ethical, and practical knowledge is taught orally 868 in the course of daily life or during long years of initiation. Certain old masters renowned for their learning are consulted from far distances when a chief is in doubt on a point of tradition.

212 Nevertheless, signs do exist for a secret writing that the priests, the heads of families, or blacksmiths draw on the sanctuaries, on masks, furniture, clothing, cabin walls, or in the sand.

212 For the Bambara, things exist by signs. These signs have at- 812 tached themselves to things, calling them to consciousness and to the attention of man.

212 From the central core of creation four categories of signs have
812 emerged, 266 in all, which represent the complete signs of the world; they give color, form, and matter to things. In time these 266 signs came to head lists of an infinity of other signs encompassing all of creation.

"It is by these signs that man enters into possession of the greatest part of his domain, which is the universe. And in the measure that he does not know a sign, that he cannot analyze it, that is, possess it in its component parts, he finds certain sectors of the total knowledge of things closed to him." (1)

1. M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, Signes graphiques soudanais [Sudanese Graphic Signs].

815 The Bambara, like the Dogon, represent the movement of the stars graphically as well as mathematically, and, in particular, the revolution of the sun around the earth, center of the cosmos. These movements are measured by a cylindrical granary that they use as gnomon (wati dyati dyiginye); it is a round structure of seko [plaited walling?] with a conical roof, constructed according to precise measurements. It rests on a small packed mound in the form of a square which has first been carefully measured and oriented. Twenty-two stones are buried in each angle of the square, and 22 more in the center. Three rows of four big stones are oriented east-west on the little hill: one row on the southern side, one to the north, and one in the middle. Small wooden beams are laid on these rows. Each part and each measurement has a symbolic meaning. The gnomon serves to determine the dates of the solstices and the equinoxes by the observation of its shadow on the ground. (2)

2. D. Zahan, "Un gnomon soudanais" [A Sudanese Gnomon], Africa, 1950.

805 The diurnal and annual movements of the sun are represented
815 by a zigzag line, . Certain variations in the form of the zigzag represent the procession of the equinoxes and the variable length of the days in summer and winter, . Four angles represent the four cardinal points, and each of the lines that make up